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ABSTRACT

Interviews with 158 Latina mothers of first-grade children examined the influence of mothers' acculturation and education on their attitudes toward and involvement in their children's education. The interviews covered participants' demographic and sociocultural characteristics, perceptions of their role and efficacy, knowledge of school-related activities, educational expectations for their child, perceptions of school climate, education-related support from families and friends, barriers to parental involvement, and reported levels of involvement. Regardless of acculturation level, more-educated mothers were more likely to view their participation as "part of their job." However, for mothers with a high school education or greater, less acculturated mothers had higher levels of self-efficacy with regard to their involvement and had higher expectations for their children than did more acculturated mothers. There was no evidence that the mothers found the school climate to be hostile or unreceptive. However, compared to their counterparts, less acculturated mothers and less educated mothers reported more barriers to their involvement and greater support from their spouses. Regardless of acculturation or education, Latina mothers participated in parental involvement activities ranging from "basic obligations" to "involvement in school governance," but more-educated mothers engaged in activities more frequently. (Contains 60 references.) (SV)

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by Robert P. Moreno, Ph.D.
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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July 1999

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Abstract:

The present study examined Latina mothers'acculturation and education levels with respect to various sociocultural, personal, and contextual factors related to mothers'level of parental involvement. The sample consisted of 158 Latina mothers, who were the primary care providers of their first grade children. The results indicated that although less acculturated Latinas reported less knowledge about school activities and more barriers to involvement, they also report high levels of perceived efficacy relevant to parental involvement, higher educational expectations, and greater spousal support. The findings highlight the importance of examining the within-groups differences related to Latino populations and questions prevalent assumptions regarding the role of acculturation with regard to parental involvement.

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Latina Mothers' Involvement in their Children's Schooling: The Role of Maternal Education and Acculturation

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Latina Mothers' Involvement in Their Children's Schooling: The Role of Maternal Education and Acculturation

Commission reports and national surveys all indicate that Latino youths, especially Latinos of Mexican and Puerto Rican ancestry, experience excessive rates of negative educational outcomes (National Center for Education Statistics, 1990; National Commission on Secondary Education of Hispanics, 1984). The Latino school dropout rate, which hovers at or above 50% in several major urban school districts, illustrates the overwhelming extent of school failure in this community (Hammack, 1986). Although Latino adolescents' educational outcomes capture most of the research and media attention, there is strong evidence that indicate that failure trajectories are set during the early elementary school years (Coleman et al., 1966; NCES, 1990; NCSEH, 1984).

Amidst this educational crisis, "parent involvement" has been identified as one of several factors that can promote students' success (Coleman, 1987; Epstein, 1990; National Commission on Educational Excellence in Education, 1983; Oakes and Lipton, 1990). Unfortunately, relatively few studies examining the prevalence and efficacy of parent involvement have included Latinos. This is particularly disconcerting since Latinos are both one of the fastest growing and most educationally at risk segments of the U.S. population (Chapa and Valencia, 1993).

Of the parental involvement studies that have included Latinos, many suffer from various methodological shortcomings. Many comparative studies, for example, have confound race/ethnicity with social class (Coleman et al., 1966; Lynch and Stein, 1987; Stein, 1983; Stevenson et al., 1990). Studies that have included immigrant populations (i.e., Latino, Asian, etc.) generally have not taken into account variables such as acculturation, length of residence in U.S. or generational status. Furthermore, when group differences were revealed, the reason for the differences were often not well explained. Consequently, although past studies have documented Latino parents' relatively low levels of involvement, sound explanations for why occurs have not been offered.

The Nature of Parental Involvement

Although parents have been involved in their children's education since the inception of public schooling, there have been a number of recent efforts to broaden the notion of "parental involvement" (Melaragno et al., 1981; Davies, 1987; Jackson and Cooper, 1989). Drawing on the increasing emphasis of an ecological understanding of human behavior, (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1986b; Harrison et al., 1990; Slaughter-Defoe et al., 1990), Epstein (1990) provides a useful and comprehensive categorization of parent involvement. Epstein's typology (see Epstein, 1990) recognizes that parents engage in and participate in their children's education along a number of dimensions. She describes five types of involvement (four directly associated with parents):

TYPE 1. *The basic obligations of parents* refer to responsibilities of families for children's health and safety; parenting and child-rearing skills to prepare children for school; supervision, discipline, and guidance for children at each age level; and *positive home conditions* that support school learning and behavior appropriate for each grade.

TYPE 2. *The basic obligations of schools* refer to the *communications from school-to-home* about school programs and children's progress, including the form and frequency of communications such as memos, notices, report cards, and conferences to inform all parents about school programs and their children's progress.

TYPE 3. *Parent involvement at school* refers to parent volunteers who assist teachers, administrators, and children in classrooms or in other areas of the school. It also refers to parents who come to school to support and watch student performances, sports, and other events.

TYPE 4. *Parent involvement in learning activities at home* refers to parent-initiated, child-initiated requests for help, particularly, to ideas from teacher for parents to *monitor and assist their own children* at home on learning activities coordinated with the children's classwork.

TYPE 5. *Parent involvement in governance and advocacy* refers to parents in *decision-making* roles in the decision-making PTA/PTO, Advisory Councils, or other committees or groups at the school, district, or state level. It also refers to parent and community activists in independent advocacy groups that monitor the schools and work for school improvement (pp. 113-114).

The Influences on Parental Involvement

Although many of the factors discussed below have not been extensively utilized among Latinos, the general literature has suggested a number of factors that may influence parents' desire or ability to participate in their children's schooling. In general, these factors can be classified into three areas: *personal/psychological, contextual,* and *sociocultural.*

Personal and Psychological Factors

Much has been written about the relationship between parents' personal and psychological factors and children's educational development (Goodnow, 1988; Marjoribanks, 1979; Miller, 1988; Sigel, 1985). This interest stems, in part, from a conviction that parents' behaviors mediate the relationship between parental beliefs and children's developmental outcomes (Miller, 1988). Several psychological factors have been cited as particularly relevant to parents' level of involvement in their children's education, including: parental role, aspirations for their children, self-efficacy, and knowledge.

Parental role definition. Parents' understanding of their own roles is crucial because it is an important link between their individual behaviors and a particular social situation (i.e., their children's schooling). For example, even if parents have high educational aspirations for their children and have high efficacy beliefs about their ability, they will be less likely to involve themselves in their children's schooling if they do not believe that they *should* be responsible for the education of their children. In general, those parents who believed that they should be involved in their children's education are generally more likely to report being involved in their children's education than parents who did not accept this role definition (Meighan, 1989; Schaefer and Edgerton, 1985; Sigel, 1985).

Parental aspirations. As suggested earlier, parents' educational aspirations for their children has been established as an important predictor of their involvement in their children's schooling (Henderson, 1981; Hess and Holloway, 1984). This relationship has been observed within the Latino populations as well (Anderson and Johnson, 1971; Henderson and Merrit, 1968; Soto, 1988). In general, parents with high aspirations for their children's educational attainment are more likely to involve themselves in their schooling than parents with low aspirations for their children's educational attainment.

Parental efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to people's expectations that they can successfully cope in particular situations (Bandura, 1977). With respect to parent involvement, parents who perceive themselves as competent tend to become more involved in their children's education than their less competent counterparts. Although the relation between parental efficacy and parent involvement has been supported in several studies (Hess, 1969; Schaefer and Edgerton, 1985; Swick, 1987 and 1988), it has not been widely studied among Latinos. This is problematic for two reasons: 1) although parental-efficacy has been positively related to parental schooling attainment (Swick, 1988), educational attainment among Latinos is particularly low with respect to the rest of the U.S. population; and 2) Latino parents' level of acculturation may influence their familiarity with their children's schools and their roles as parents within these schools (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Stevenson et al., 1990). Ultimately, Latino parents' lack of familiarity with the American school system may also influence their efficacy beliefs regarding involvement in their children's schooling.

Parents' knowledge of school activities. Researchers have found that parents' knowledge of school-related activities was an important factor in their level of involvement (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990). Among Mexican Americans, Delgado-Gaitan reported that parents' social isolation from other families and their lack of English-language-proficiency "created a knowledge gap" (p. 141) which influenced their involvement patterns. Similarly Klimes-Dougan et al., (1990) found that Latino parents with greater levels of knowledge about parent involvement activities and opportunities reported greater levels of involvement than Latino parents with lower levels of knowledge.

Contextual Factors

School climate. Researchers argue that environments, and in this case, schools have "unique personalities" which facilitate or constrain certain behaviors. Moreover, "the way one perceives his surroundings or environment influences the way one will behave in that environment" (Insel and Moos, 1974, p. 179). Although researchers have found a positive relationship between parent involvement and school climate (Haynes, Comer, and Hamilton-Lee, 1989), little evidence exists which examines Latino parents perceptions of school climates and its relation to parental involvement. Anecdotal evidence has suggested that Latino parents may perceive the school environment as uncomfortable, cold, and indifferent to

their needs (Lopez, 1977; Nieto, 1985). This may be due in part to Latino parents lack of familiarity with U.S. schools (at least for more recent immigrants). Thus Latino parents may feel less welcomed in their children's schools and be less involved in their child's education.

Social support. Researchers have suggested that parents' social support systems enable them to involve themselves in their children's schooling (Clark, 1983; Epstein, 1990). However, the influence of social support and Latino parent involvement has not been formally studied. In general, research has found a significant positive relationship between Mexican American levels of social support, socioeconomic, and acculturation level. Specifically, Mexican Americans with higher levels of acculturation and educational status report higher social support networks and more frequent contact with their network members than less acculturated and less educated Mexican Americans (Griffith and Villaviciencio, 1985).

Barriers. A variety of factors are thought to interfere with parents' involvement practices. According to Adelman (1990), barriers to parent involvement fall into three categories: personal (e.g., lack of interest on the part of specific parents and teachers, parents' and teachers' perceptions of their roles, lack of requisite skills by parents and teachers); impersonal (e.g., practical problems due to conflicting work schedules of parents and teachers, child care, transportation); and institutional factors (e.g., lack of bilingual staff, inadequate training of teachers, inadequate resources to support teachers' efforts to increase parent involvement). Each category may take the form of negative attitudes, lack of mechanisms/skills, or practical deterrents.

Sociocultural Factors

Commonly referred to as "demographic variables," sociocultural factors (i.e., ethnicity/race, education level, etc.) are important in understanding a parents' level of participation in their children's education.

Ethnicity/Race. Several researchers have suggested that ethnicity and/or race is an important indicator of parents' level of involvement. Lynch and Stein (1987), for example, found that Latino parents reported significantly lower levels of involvement in their children's educational planning decisions when compared to their African American and non-Hispanic White counterparts. Similarly, Stevenson, Chen, and Uttal (1990) found that — despite having very positive attitudes toward their children's schooling — Latino mothers reported being less involved in their children's schooling than African American and non-Hispanic White parents.

Education/SES. Research has consistently found that parents from middle- and high-socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to participate in their children's education than parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Epstein, 1990; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987; Lareau, 1989; Stevenson, Chen, and Uttal, 1990). Similarly, maternal education level has been a particularly important variable for understanding teaching interactions in the home among Mexican American mothers (Laosa, 1982, Moreno, 1997). In fact, Laosa (1982) argues persuasively that maternal education is often a better indicator of educational related activities than broader measures like socioeconomic status.

Acculturation. Acculturation level has been shown to be an important factor for understanding the Latinos across a number of contexts (Marín and Marín, 1991). Rueschenberg and Buriel (1987), for example, found a positive relationship between parental acculturation levels and involvement with their children's schools. Similarly, Anderson and Johnson (1968, p. 11) found that "the amount of (parental) assistance that children report increases with each generation."

Major Research Objective

More recent qualitative research suggests that the processes by which Latino parents impact their children's academic achievement may differ from their White, middle-class counterparts (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Gándara, 1995; Valdés, 1996). Thus, more in-depth research is necessary to identify the unique issues facing Latino families' ability to participate in their children's education.

The main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of language proficiency and family socioeconomic status on Latina mothers' involvement in their children's schooling. More specifically, this study will investigate the influence of sociocultural factors on (1) personal and psychological factors, (2) contextual factors, and (3) levels of involvement.

Method

Participants

Participants were identified from a list of families who had children enrolled in first grade classes in the five Los Angeles County public elementary schools. The schools were selected on the basis of their high Latino student enrollments. All of the participants were residents of the County of Los Angeles.

The sample consisted of 158 Latina mothers who were the primary care providers of their first grade children (51% male, 49% female). The average age of the mothers was 33 years (SD = 6.12), with 64% of the mothers possessing less than high school education and only 36% of the mothers with greater than high school education. The mothers also varied in ethnic background with 78% of the mothers self-identifying as "Mexican American," 16% as "Central American," 1% as "South American" and 5% as "other." As for marital status, 75% of the mothers reported that they were in an intact 2-parent family, 18% divorced or separated, 1% widowed, and 6% single mothers. The mothers average length of residence in the United States was 13 years (SD = 6.60).

Procedures

The mothers were identified and contacted by trained interviewers, fluent in both Spanish and English. Upon consent, all participants were administered an 80-item questionnaire (in the mother's preferred language). The interview required 30-45 minutes to complete.

Measures

The questionnaire consisted of four categories: (1) sociocultural, (2) personal/psychological, (3) contextual, and (4) involvement in their children's schooling.

Sociocultural. Participants were asked to provide information on their age, marital status, acculturation status, length of time in the U.S., number of children and adults in home, and the educational and occupational level of respondent and her spouse/partner.

Personal and psychological. Mothers were asked to respond to four areas to assess their perceptions and attitudes toward parental involvement: (a) role definition, (b) perceived efficacy, (c), school knowledge, and (d) educational expectations for their child.

Role definition consisted of six items designed to assess parents' attitudes toward their role in their children's educational development. Three items were drawn from Schaefer and Edgerton's Parental Modernity Scale (1985), with three additional items developed specifically to assess specific parent involvement activities. The role definition score was computed by summation of the responses to the individual items. A possible score ranged from 6-12 points.

Perceived efficacy consisted of seven items drawn from the Parenting Sense of Competence (PSOC) scale (Johnston and Mash, 1989). Items were slightly modified to specifically address parents'perceived efficacy for parent involvement situations. In addition, pilot testing suggested that the respondents were not responsive to the subtle distinctions between the 4-point scale. As a result, the items were modified to a 2-point scale ("agreed" or "disagreed").

School knowledge consisted of 10 questions asking parents their knowledge regarding the presence of common school-related activities. The school knowledge score was computed by summation of the number of "yes" responses.

Educational expectations consisted of three multiple-choice items which question parents regarding their short-term and long-term educational exceptions for their children (Seginer, 1983).

Contextual. Three measures were used to assess mothers' perception of contextual factors relevant to parent involvement: (a) school climate, (b) social support, and (c) barriers.

School climate was a 5-item measure of the parents' perceptions of the school environment with regard to parental involvement (i.e., "Do you believe that even parents with little education are welcomed at school?"). Each item was scored on a 4-point scale (one = "never" to four = "almost always"). The school climate score consisted of the mean response of the five items.

Social support assessed the perceptions of the support and assistance parents received from the family members and friends regarding school involvement. Mothers were asked to identify the number of family members (from a list of 10 family members) who provide assistance and to estimate the frequency of assistance ("every few days" to "every few months") (Griffith and Villaviciencio, 1985). The social support measure yielded four scores: familial support (mean size and frequency) and non-familial support (mean size and frequency).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics by Acculturation Level

	High Accult. (n=61)			Low Accult. (n=97)			
	m	*sd*	%	*m*	*sd*	%	*t*
Mothers Age	32.37	(7.08)		33.39	(5.38)		-1.08
Children in Home	2.80	(1.27)		3.28	(1.32)		-1.77
# of Yrs. in U.S.	28.72	(9.76)		12.43	(6.60)		11.4***
Mothers Years of Schooling	11.47	(1.56)		7.13	(3.75)		9.99**
Mothers Received Education in Latin-America			13			98	X^2
in U.S.			87			2	118.73***

*.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

Barriers to parental involvement were assessed in two steps. First mothers were asked whether they experienced difficulty being involved in their children's education. If the mother responded "yes," then the interviewer read a list of nine common problems. The mothers were asked to indicate which problems they encountered that made it difficult for them to be involved. The barrier score was the sum total number of problems identified by the mother. A possible score ranged from 0-9.

Mothers' reported level of involvement. Mothers' level of involvement was assessed in two parts. First, mothers were asked if they participated in the various involvement activities. The measure included two involvement activities from the five types of parent involvement (Epstein, 1990). If they responded "yes" to any activity, they were asked how often. The level of involvement yielded two scores, mean *quantity of involvement* and mean *frequency of involvement.*

Results

The analyses were organized with respect to the major research objectives. First, using a median split, the sample was divided into two groups according to their level of acculturation. Then a series of t-tests and chi squares were conducted to assess the difference among the two groups (see Table 1). Acculturated mothers reported living in the U.S. for a greater number of years, $t = (94.6) = 11.47$, $p < .0001$. They also reported more years of schooling $t\ (138.4) = 9.99$, $p < .001$, and were more likely to receive their education in the U.S. $X^2\ (1) = 118.73$, $p < .0001$.

Personal and Psychological Factors

Next a series of 2X2 ANOVAs with *Acculturation* (high, low) and *Maternal Education* (less than high school vs. high school or greater) as factors – were conducted examining the mothers' personal attitudes and beliefs regarding parental involvement (see Table 2).

Role definition. The analysis indicated a significant main effect for *maternal educational* on parents'role definition in their children's education $F(1,155) = 34.85$, $p < .0001$. The findings indicated that mothers with at least a high school education defined a greater role in their children's education.

Perceived efficacy. There was a significant main effect for *acculturation* on perceived efficacy, $F\ (1,155) = 3.97$, $p < .04$, indicating that more acculturated mothers reported higher levels of perceived efficacy than their less acculturated counterparts. There was also a significant *acculturation* x *maternal education* interaction, $F\ (1, 155) = 6.03$, $p < .01$. The findings showed that although the perceived efficacy of the more acculturated remained

Table 2. Means and (Standard Deviations) of Perceptions, Attitudes, and Beliefs by Acculturation

	Accult. High *M*	Accult. Low *M*	Ed. *F*	Accult. *F*	Ed X Accult. *F*
Knowledge of School Act.			3.43	15.15***	1.75
<High School	9.00	7.64			
	(1.09)	(1.57)			
High School	8.56	7.94			
	(1.42)	(1.08)			
Perceived Efficacy			1.96	3.97*	6.03**
<High School	11.80	11.78			
	(1.83)	(1.59)			
High School	11.71	13.71			
	(1.48)	(1.46)			
Educational Role Definition			34.85***	2.53	0.08
<High School	9.66	9.36			
	(1.42)	(1.11)			
High School	10.71	10.29			
	(1.12)	(1.26)			
Educational Expectations					
Grades			0.04	7.71**	0.46
<High School	2.57	3.1			
	(0.81)	(0.85)			
High School	2.92	3.23			
	(0.87)	(0.75)			
Next Year			0.15	6.86**	0.00
<High School	3.14	3.46			
	(0.72)	(0.59)			
High School	3.25	3.58			
	(0.71)	(0.79)			

*p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

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constant across educational status levels, the less acculturated mothers with at least a high school education scored significantly higher than less acculturated mothers with less than a high school education.

School knowledge. There was a significant effect for *acculturation* on school knowledge, $F(1,155) = 15.14$, $p < .0001$, indicating that more acculturated mothers reported greater knowledge of school activities compared to their less acculturate counterparts.

Educational Expectations. A significant main effect for *acculturation* was found on educational expectations with respect to grade $F(1,155) = 7.71$, $p = .006$. The analysis indicated that less acculturated mothers have higher expectations about their children's academic performance than their more acculturated counterparts.

A significant main effect for acculturation was also found on expected school attainment $F(1,155) = 6.86$, $p = .004$, with less acculturated mothers reporting higher expected attainment from their children than more acculturated mothers.

Contextual Factors

A series of 2X2 ANOVAs — with ACCULTURATION (high, low) and MATERNAL EDUCATION (less than high school vs. high school or greater) as factors — were conducted examining the mothers' perceptions of environmental factors (see Table 3).

Barriers. A main effect was found for *acculturation* on barriers $F(1,155) = 4.78$, $p = .03$. As expected, less acculturated mothers reported more barriers regarding their involvement as compared to more acculturated mothers. A main effect was also found for *maternal education* $F(1,155) = 4.78$, $p = .03$, indicating that mothers who possessed less than a high school education reported more barriers to involvement than mothers with a high school education or greater.

School climate. No significant difference was found with respect to the Latina mothers' perceptions of school climate. Overall, the mothers'reported feeling welcomed in the school setting.

Social support (Spousal support). Of the respondents who indicated some type of familial support, approximately 60% of them indicated that they received some help from their spouse or partner. A main effect was revealed for *acculturation* on quantity of spousal support $F(1,155) = 4.49$, $p < .05$, indicating that less acculturated mothers reported the presence of spousal support as compared to more acculturated mothers. A main effect was also revealed for *maternal education* on frequency of social support $F(1,155) = 3.89$, $p = .05$. The analyses indicated that less educated mothers reported more frequent support from their spouses than their more educated counterparts. A main effect was also found for *acculturation* $F(1,155) = 4.08$, $p < .04$, showing that less acculturated mothers reported more frequent support from their spouses than more acculturated mothers.

Table 3. Means and (Standard Deviations) of Mothers' Perceptions of Environmental Variables

	Accult. High	Accult. Low	Ed.	Accult.	Ed X Accult.
	M	*M*	*F*	*F*	*F*
School Climate			0.68	0.05	1.17
<High School	3.08 (0.76)	3.22 (0.66)			
High School	3.33 (0.65)	3.20 (0.62)			
Social (Spousal) Support					
Qty.			1.01	4.49*	0.01
<High School	0.57 (0.50)	0.75 (0.43)			
High School	0.58 (0.49)	0.76 (0.43)			
Frequency			3.89*	4.08*	0.27
<High School	4.85 (1.52)	5.17 (0.91)			
High School	4.46 (1.41)	4.52 (1.32)			
Barriers			12.25***	4.78*	5.07*
<High School	1.71 (1.30)	2.97 (1.88)			
High School	1.79 (1.19)	1.64 (1.65)			

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Parental Involvement

A series of 2X2 ANOVAs — with ACCULTURATION (high, low) and MATERNAL EDUCATION (less than high school vs. high school or greater) as factors — were conducted examining the mothers' level of parental involvement (see Table 4).

There wasn't a difference with respect to quantity of parental involvement. A main effect was found for maternal education on frequency of involvement $F(1,155) = 6.32$, $p = .01$, indicating that mothers with more education engaged in parental involvement activities more.

Table 4. Means and (Standard Deviations) of Mothers'Involvement by Acculturation and Maternal Education

	Accult. High *M*	Accult. Low *M*	Ed. *F*	Accult. *F*	Ed X Accult. *F*
Parental Involvement					
Quantity.			1.25	0.22	0.0
<High School	5.85	6.01			
	(2.90)	(1.69)			
High School	6.28	6.47			
	(1.84)	(1.54)			
Frequency			6.32**	1.74	1.64
<High School	2.57	2.80			
	(0.58)	(0.50)			
High School	2.97	2.95			
	(0.52)	(0.31)			

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Discussion

The results of the study highlight the importance of examining "within-groups" differences related to Latino populations. There were many important findings indicating the relationship between sociocultural, personal/ psychological, contextual factors, and mothers' involvement.

Personal and Psychological Factors

The mothers' education level is particularly relevant to understanding how mothers defined their role with respect to their children's education. Simply put, educated mothers tend to view their participation as "part of their job" more than less-educated mothers. This is the case regardless of the mothers'acculturation level. However, the findings also indicate that Latina mothers with at least a high school education or greater, but are less acculturated, have the greatest level of self efficacy with regards to their involvement in their child's schooling. Similarly, less acculturated mothers also have higher expectations and higher expected attainment from their children than their more acculturated counterparts.

One explanation for these results may be that although less acculturated Latina mothers are "less acculturated" with respect to U.S. society, they possess their own cultural attitudes and beliefs from their country of origin which serve as a "resource" for their own self efficacy. They may possess a particular "immigrant zeal," which predisposes them to have a particularly positive outlook for their children's future. Similar findings are shown for Latina mothers' conceptualization of child development (Gutierrez and Sameroff, 1990, Gutierrez, Sameroff, 1988).

Conversely, less acculturated mothers had less knowledge of school activities than their more acculturated counterparts. This may be due to the mother's English language proficiency. Less acculturated mothers, who are primarily Spanish speaking, are less likely to be informed by schools that communicate to parents in English.

Contextual Factors

We found no evidence that the mothers found the school climate hostile or unreceptive. However, the mothers did vary in their reported perceptions of support and barriers. Less acculturated mothers were more likely to report that their spouses provided them with support. Furthermore, less acculturated mothers, reported that their spouses supported them more often than their more acculturated counterparts. Similarly, less educated mothers reported that their spouses supported them more often than more educated counterparts.

Although this finding appears to be somewhat counter intuitive, at least two explanations are possible. On one hand, it may be the case that, although the mothers were questioned with regards to childcare, house cleaning, etc., less educated and acculturated mothers define "support" differently and have different expectations regarding their spouses' activities than more educated and acculturated mothers. On the other hand, it may be that because less educated and less acculturated mothers face greater barriers in general, spouses provide greater assistance, to meet the demands. This is supported to some extent given that both less educated and less acculturated Latina mothers reported that they faced greater barriers to their involvement in their child's education than more educated and acculturated mothers.

Parental Involvement

Finally, we found that Latina mothers, regardless of their education and acculturation, participate in parental involvement activities ranging from "basic obligations" to "involvement in school governance." However, more educated mothers did report that they engaged in these parental involvement activities more frequently.

Summary

As anticipated, Latina mothers' sociocultural factors, such as education and acculturation, are key to understudying personal and contextual factors relevant to parent involvement. With regards to the mothers' levels of education, many of these findings are consistent with prior research on parental involvement with non-Hispanic Whites (Epstein, 1990; Lareau, 1987, 1989) and Mexican American populations (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1991; Henderson and Merritt, 1968; Laosa, 1982; Laosa and Henderson, 1991). Moreover, these findings make conceptual sense. Latina parents with higher educational status typically have more familiarity with the school system (i.e., knowledge), and more awareness of their role vis-à-vis their children's education. These characteristics give educated Latina mothers more "power" or "resources" with which to involve themselves in their children's education than their less educated counterparts.

The relationship between acculturation level and personal, contextual, and involvement factors proved to be complex. Although previous researchers have viewed acculturation as a "demographic" index of "resources" (i.e., less acculturated = less resources), the findings here clearly indicate that acculturation is not a simple unidimensional construct. While it is true that less acculturated Latinas reported less knowledge about school activities and more barriers to involvement, it is also true that these less acculturated Latina also report higher levels of perceived efficacy relevant to parent involvement, higher educational expectations with regard to their children's schooling, and greater spousal support. It suggests that their cultural attitudes and beliefs from their country of origin also serve as a "resource."

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